



ByWard Market Business Improvement Area

Zone d'améliorations commerciales du marché By

Hon. Mona Fortier, PC, MP
Member of Parliament for Ottawa-Vanier
House of Commons
K1A 0A6

February 9, 2022

Re: Urgent funding required for businesses affected by Convoy Disruptions

Minister Fortier,

It is with urgency and grave concern that we write to you emphasizing the need for federal funding for Ottawa businesses affected by the ongoing demonstrations. As our colleagues at OCOBIA have written, this funding is required to assure the very survival of many of our favourite businesses in Ottawa.

Specifically, in the ByWard Market we are hearing from our members and the tenor is one of fear and despair. Our businesses – over 600, many owner-operator – are concerned about their livelihoods and that of their staff amid the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health restrictions, the loss of Winterlude, and now a massive convoy driving away already minimal February traffic. In essence, what is already a slow time for many businesses is now paired with little hope that they'll make it through the first quarter.

The need for immediate federal grant support for businesses and their staff has never been greater.

The stories of our businesses are heartbreaking. These are local business owners who love their community and are at a loss for what to do. We have one business that employs 50 people and is only doing 25% of their already lean business. They are weighing options and are actively discerning laying off their staff so they may collect Employment Insurance.

One business has faced 96,000\$ in losses in this quarter as their goods sit in warehouses unable to be sold. They are worried about how to pay rent as they have borrowed what they can and have gone without their own wages for months.

Another has been closed for the duration of the convoy disruptions because as members of an equity deserving group it is not safe. They too are concerned for their staff who have gone without wages, and their own livelihoods.

We have staff who are going weeks without pay, who are wondering if they can make rent and afford groceries at a time when cost of living continues to rise. We have business owners choosing between



paying their staff and paying their rent, not knowing if they can make a full rent payment until into the second quarter, if at all.

Landlords are unable to continue to waive rents or accept partial payments. They too are often local businesses who have been relying on loans to cover operating costs as banks are not waiting for mortgages, governments are not waiving property taxes, and insurance premiums and utilities, which continue to rise, and continue to be required even when the businesses are closed or struggling.

No part of our economic ecosystem can bear the brunt of another sustained closure, without additional support.

We are facing the very real risk of permanent closures from not only financial instability but a lack of confidence in assuring the safety of themselves and their businesses, let alone the need for future economic growth.

Again, we are seeking urgent and immediate federal grant support for the thousands of businesses that are struggling in Ottawa. We thank you for your work to date in meeting with ourselves and other BIAs in hearing these issues and are happy to provide further details or meet with you and any of your colleagues to prioritize this much needed, urgent funding.

Sincerely,



Kalin McCluskey
Executive Director
ByWard Market BIA

CC:
Mathieu Fleury, Councillor, Ward 12, City of Ottawa
Michelle Groulx, Executive Director, OCOBIA
Ashley Hopkins, Chair, ByWard Market BIA